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ABSTRACT

Written by an educator, this book is designed to help parents develop a solid working relationship with their school-age children and their children's teachers, to dispel some popular "homework myths," to help parents and children become more efficient at homework, and to offer suggestions on how to help children become more independent with homework. Section 1, "Parent Involvement," contains these chapters: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Parent/Teacher Conferences"; (3) "Communication"; (4) "Monitor All Materials"; and (5) "Fight When Needed." Section 2, "Homework Myths," contains chapters: (6) "Laziness"; (7) "Traditional Study Environment"; (8) "You Should Know This"; (9) "Incorrect Priorities"; and (10) "If Education Was Important to You." Section 3, "Preparing for Battle," contains chapters: (11) "'Battle Stations'"; (12) "Keep a Positive Attitude"; (13) "Suggestions for Creating a Good Study Environment"; (14) "Set Time Guidelines"; and (15) "Monitor the Progress." Section 4, "Study Tips for Specific Content Areas," contains: (16) "Overview"; (17) "Spelling/Vocabulary"; (18) "Textbook"; (19) "Novel"; (20) "Mapping/Outlining"; (21) "Timelines"; and (22) "Statistics." Section 5 contains the book's brief conclusion. (EV)

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ED 437 195

Parents Make the Difference

A guide for parents who want to be involved in their child's education.

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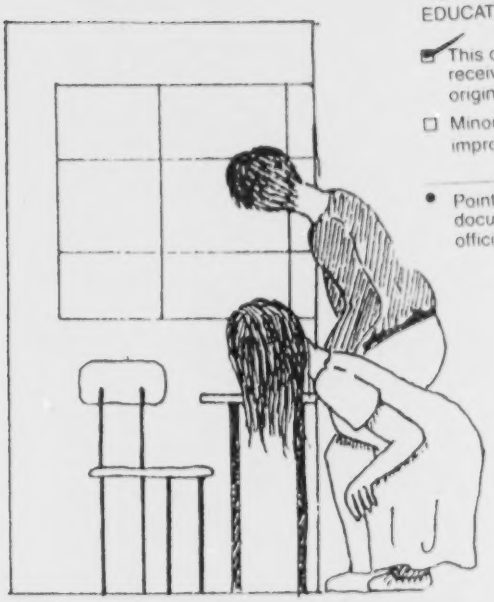

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by
Robin Quick

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Dedication

To my husband for allowing me to hide in the computer room for so many hours,

To my son for teaching me the difference between "won't" and "can't,"

and

To my daughter for teaching me what stamina can accomplish.

My love for you runs deeper than words can describe.

Special thanks to Molly Weber, age 17, for the illustrations.

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SECTION ONE

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

You have worked all day, you're tired, you have dinner to make, and the chicken you pulled out earlier has not thawed out yet. The door slams indicating that your child, the apple of your eye, the bright spot in your otherwise dull day, your little cherub, has returned home from school.

"How was school?" you ask your studious youngster. "Stupid" is the reply, "Mrs. Smith gave me a ton of homework. It'll take me all night!"

As you gaze upon this otherwise delightful child, your shoulders droop as you realize, the real work is about to begin.

Sound familiar? Well, you are not alone. Parents around the world are feeling the same way. This book was written to help you become involved with your child's education without being overcome by it.

This book is designed to help you develop a solid working relationship between yourself, your child and your child's teachers. Being an informed parent takes effort. You may find teachers who are not accustomed to interacting with parents and they may need some guidance from you.

Secondly, it is designed to dispel some of the more popular "homework myths." This is my term for the traditional, and often misguided, thoughts surrounding at-home study time.

Also, it is to help both you and your child become more efficient at homework. By virtue of the name alone, "H-O-M-E-work," you have become part of the process.

And last, but not least, this book is intended to offer some suggestions on how to help your child become more independent with homework. It is, after all, their assignment!

Many of the suggestions mentioned in this book were gleaned from trial and error activities with my son, Rob and my daughter, Christina. I will mention them on occasion as examples, so allow me introduce you:

Christina, currently a high school senior, is a straight 'A' National Honor Society member, who is active in softball, golf, and FHA. She is the yearbook editor, member of the newspaper staff, and does regular community service. I love her dearly and wouldn't trade her for the world.

Robert, a college freshman, is a student with learning disabilities who struggled throughout his entire school career. He was active in wrestling during high school, and is currently pursuing his dream of becoming a chef. I love him dearly and wouldn't trade him for the world.

Two completely different children, yet they are very much alike in many ways. Through them, I have gained knowledge from both sides of the educational system (as a parent and as a teacher).

My years as a classroom teacher and educational director at a local learning center have allowed me to experience the frustration felt by students, teachers, and parents. I have listened to all sides and have come to the conclusion that many times it is a lack of communication among these three parties that causes most of the problems.

I hope to help you design a plan of action that addresses the needs of all three.

School is not a place that you or your child should be afraid to approach. The faculty and staff have the same goal for your child that you do: to help them learn. Working together can only help everyone involved.

Let me state up front that you must become involved in your child's education for any of the suggested activities to be effective. It has been documented that a parent's involvement has a direct impact with how their child does in school.

Let's face it, whether the child would admit it or not, you are the most important and influential person in their lives.

I find it interesting that I can almost always match a child with their parent simply by watching the mannerisms of the child. My students mimic the actions and mannerisms of

their parents almost 100 percent of the time. With that thought in mind, let me impress upon you as parents: your child must see that education is important to you.

What do you picture when you hear the term "parent involvement?" Do you see several mothers sitting around a table cutting pumpkins out of orange construction paper?

Most people do.

However, even though these activities are important and appreciated, parents need to be involved throughout all twelve years. Involvement does not end when the child leaves the elementary grades.

Our school system has no secret agenda. There is no mystery behind those hallowed walls. In order to observe this you need to become as active as you can in all aspects of your child's education.

That may include: monitoring grades, test results, behavior, peer relations, classroom atmosphere, social environment, and/or extra-curricular activities. Start becoming involved by joining advisory committees, attending PTA or PTO meetings, etc.

Let's begin by looking at some immediate ways that you can become involved with your child's education.

Side note: because education affects boys and girls equally, I will alternate the terms "he" and "she" by chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES

The most important thing to remember about parent/teacher conferences is: **don't skip them**.

Almost every school offers an Open House night during the first month of each school year. An Open House is your teacher's opportunity to put a face with a name. It is also your chance to do the same. These meetings

are usually 10 minutes long and are simply a get-acquainted time.

However, while you are there schedule a longer visit in order to discuss your child further and find out what will be expected of her during the upcoming school year.

The opportunity to discuss your child's academic progress will come during a scheduled "parent/teacher conference." If you are concerned about an academic or social issue that can not wait until the school schedules such a meeting don't be afraid to call the school and request one.

While you are at the Open House, take the time to size up the teacher, the room, the physical environment, and the atmosphere.

Make a mental note of where your child's seat is; does she have anything displayed on the walls; how much room is there for books or personal items, and is there a prevailing theme in the room?

These are all things that may help you to better understand the rules your child may be expected to follow each day and why particular things may happen.

Let's take for example your child's desk area.

*Does she have a desk into which she can place her books, pencils, lunch money, etc.?

*Is there room inside for a large multi-pocket zippered notebook system. One that carries everything at once?

*Would she be better off with a thinner, single-folder system?

*Is there a locker in the hallway for her belongings?

*Will you need to purchase a lock?

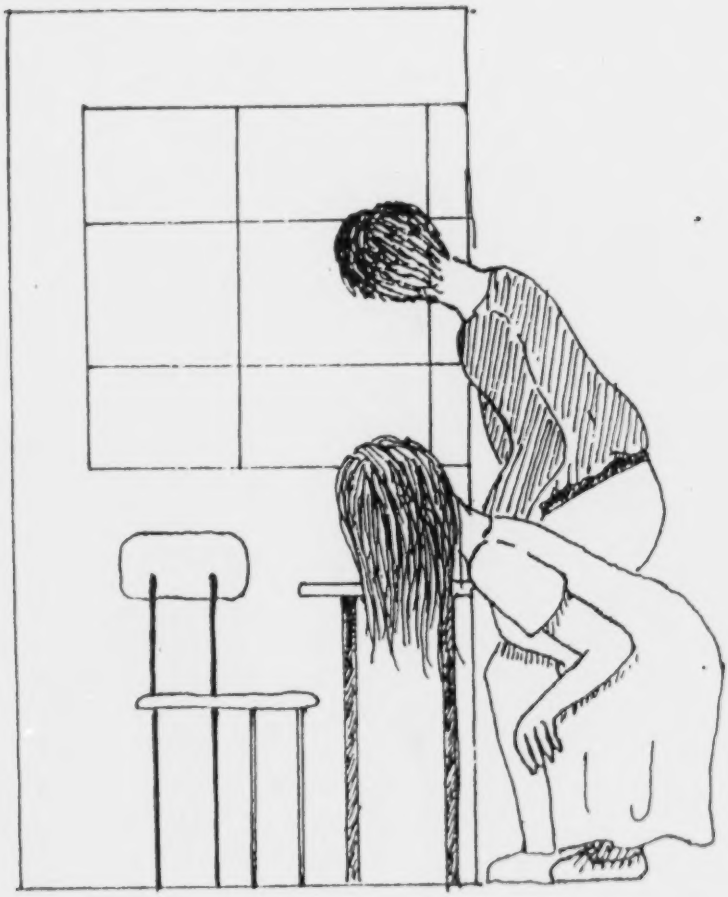
*If there isn't a locker available, where are these things stored?

*What about the safety of lunch money and other valuables?

These are a few questions that surround only one specific area. There are similar questions for the many other possible issues involving your child's school experience. Use the situations mentioned previously as a guideline.

Many a student has complained to me about not having enough time to get from their locker to class, or that someone stole their homework out of their desk. These are issues that a parent can address when checking out the classroom on Open House night.

How you prepare your child for class is as important as the time they spend inside it.



Do you want to go first?

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNICATION

It is very important that you keep an open line of communication with your child's teacher or teachers. These are the adults in charge of educating your child. Get to know them!

This takes a little bit of work in the beginning, but it will be worth it down the road.

Sending in a note if you have a question or just want an update is a

non-intrusive way to contact the teacher. It is your right as the parent to know how your child is doing. Don't be afraid to ask.

Remember, it isn't realistic to schedule meetings every couple of weeks, so just send an occasional note; ask how your child is progressing and if are there any concerns that need to be addressed. Make it a standard policy to send the note in at the end of the month, or more often if your child's situation requires it.

Keep in mind that grades are not the only indicator of how your child is doing. There are other considerations such as peer relationships, attention difficulties, illnesses, behavior, etc. If your child's teacher indicates that these things are fine and your child's grades are good, then you could reduce the frequency of the notes.

You can always begin sending them in again if the need arises.

Being knowledgeable about what your child is doing during the six or seven hours he is at school is perfectly within your right as a parent. You should not feel as if you are interfering -- that is your child.

There will be times when your child comes home and describes an incident that happened in school. This may be a true version of what happened, or it could be a child's perception of what happened.

If you have an open line of communication with the teacher you won't be as quick to make an unfair judgment call. Instead, you'll have the knowledge to discern what really took place, or the confidence to ask the teacher directly.

The teacher will appreciate the openness on your part to communicate.

CHAPTER FOUR

MONITOR ALL MATERIALS

Monitor all materials your child brings home. Look over their tests, returned homework, worksheets, etc. Don't simply look at them -- look them over.

Do you see any patterns in the errors? Analyzing the errors your child is making on his work can be very

helpful in assisting him in making permanent corrections.

Lets' look at an actual series of errors a student of mine was making:

A.	B.	C.	D.
2 1/4	8 3/6	17 2/5	1 9/18
- 1 1/2	- 6 2/6	- 9 1/4	- 7/18
3/4	2 2/12	8 3/20	1 4/36

In the unreduced form, letters B and D are wrong. But what error is this student making? Let's look at the error pattern that has developed.

The student has changed the denominator in all four problems. The denominator in letters 'B' and 'D' do not need changed. It is then noticeable that this student is changing the denominator whether it requires it or not.

When I asked this student why he was changing the denominator on every problem his response was "because the teacher said to."

Is the teacher confused? No, she was misunderstood. The teacher told the students to change the denominator so that they are the same before they subtract. This student took that to mean EVERY TIME. It took about 15 seconds to find the error and about 5 minutes to make sure he understood how to do the problems correctly from then on.

The problem arises when papers are corrected and handed back, but not discussed. This student would have learned one thing: letters B and D were wrong. What this student would not know was why. What would have happened when this student took the final exam? Unreduced, his answers would have all been wrong. Easily spotted, easily fixed.

As a parent you can take the time to discover these types of errors and try to explain them yourself, or ask the teacher to explain it to your child.

Either way, a little attention on your part can help your child avoid frustration later.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIGHT WHEN NEEDED

There are some students who are in obvious need of special education. These students are usually identified and tested fairly early in their school years.

However, there is also a group of students whose needs are not as easily recognized and are often overlooked for years.

These are the students who tend to "struggle" a bit at first, but then a more steady decline in skills and grades are noticed as the years progress. These children are typically described as "bright," **but** "lazy." They are often told that they could do better, but they are just not applying themselves.

This is not to say that we never see those students who are simply "bright" **and** "lazy." The deciding factor tends to be that these "bright" **and** "lazy" ones can do the work if they put their minds to it.

The group I am talking about are the students who try and try, but can not seem to do well. They become frustrated by work that is considered "on grade level."

These students do not work well independently, not because they need constant supervision to complete the assignment, but because they need help <u>with</u> the assignment!

If you think your child fits into this category you should talk to her teachers. Discuss with them that you think there may be more to her poor grades than lack of trying. Signs to look for include:

*uncharacteristically poor behavior

*frustration at seemingly simple assignments

*short temper / anger that is out of character

*comments like "I'm stupid"

*being labeled as the "class clown"

It is your responsibility as a parent to fight for your child. If you think that she needs to be evaluated for learning difficulties -- ask for it. Don't wait to see if she "matures," or "suddenly catches on." Waiting may only prolong the problem. Finding out early in her school career could save her (and you) years of frustration.

Some guidelines to follow:

*put your request in writing

*include her name, birthdate, grade, and name of school

*send a copy to your child's teacher and a copy to the principal

*check with your state's educational law office and ask for the number of days the school has in which to respond to your request

*call every two weeks and ask if a decision has been made on your request

I know this seems like a lot of work, but your child is worth it.

I am not advocating that every child who is struggling in school be tested for learning disabilities, but many who would benefit from the testing are overlooked.

This is not an easy-out for your student. She still must work hard. But if there is a problem with how she processes information, she may spend years spinning her wheels. A teacher trained in special education can help her learn information in a manner more appropriate to her needs.

Concept #1:

You should not be concerned about the expense the school may incur by performing this testing. The government spends billions of dollars studying the mating habits of the Tsetse fly; they can swing the cost of testing your child. If you truly feel that your child is at risk and that this testing may help, then ask for it.

Concept #2:

You cannot be concerned about the other 29 students in the room -- let their parents worry about them. You need to make sure that your child is getting the education they deserve.

Concept #3:

You can not be concerned that the school administration or the teachers will dislike you for "bugging" them. After she graduates, will it matter if the school "liked" you or not? If the results help your child learn better - will you really care about being "liked?"

Remember:

Your only concern should be *your child*.

Section Two

HOMEWORK MYTHS

CHAPTER SIX

LAZINESS

This is the myth that irks me the most, and is also the most prevalent: that if a child does not do his homework he is simply lazy and doesn't want to do it. If he would just sit down and get to it, there wouldn't be any problem.

As I mentioned earlier, there are children out there like this, but it does not fit every student and should not be applied so quickly to our children. This term was applied to my son in elementary school.

They were wrong.

To immediately assume a child is lazy is to assume too little. There are a number of reasons that children don't want to do homework, laziness being one, bad attitude being another. But just as often it may be the result of poor instructions, lack of knowledge on the subject, frustration, attention difficulties, and as referred to previously: learning disabilities.

"Laziness" is a scapegoat. It puts the blame on the child and lessens the need to deal with a more complicated reason.

If homework is a reinforcement of a lesson the child has learned in class, then it should not be a difficult task. However, if the child did not learn the lesson adequately then they will not be able to do the homework independently. If the child did not learn the lesson, why?

*Were the instructions unclear?

*Is there too much homework?

*Is the assignment more than just a reinforcement?

There are many factors that need to be considered with the idea of "laziness" and we should not be so quick to use it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRADITIONAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT

Picture the traditional study area: a small desk, hardback chair, lamp, no decorations, and silence.

Let's for a moment assume that this design is the best way for a child to learn effectively. Then why is that not what most offices look like? Why is there music playing and a soft, comfortable chair?

Let's picture the traditional office: a large desk with family photographs, cushioned office chair that tilts and rolls, coffee cup, munchies in the drawer, computer terminal, phone, and a radio.

Think about your favorite place to learn. Is it an old recliner, kitchen table, or hammock? Don't you find that you are more receptive to learning if you are comfortable?

What makes us think that our children are any different? Just as we may learn in a non-traditional setting, so may our children.

My daughter's favorite study area is on the living room floor in front of the couch watching television. She is a straight 'A' student.

Am I suggesting that you allow your child to do that? No, I'm just mentioning it to demonstrate that learning in a non-traditional manner may not doom your child to forever walk in the land of failure.

When designing an effective study environment, it is important that you look at your child and his likes and dislikes. Work with your child's natural learning style, not against it.

To find out what your child's natural learning style is you will need to do some research. There are several good books on the subject, so contact your local library.

Of course the easiest route is to observe your child when he is playing. When he is reading for enjoyment (don't laugh, it happens) does he lie down, sit in a chair, or settle in at the kitchen table? Does he prefer to hear stories read out loud?

These are all preferences that your child may be exhibiting without even knowing it. They are preferences you can use when designing a study environment at home.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"YOU SHOULD KNOW THIS"

Who says? Who decides what a child *should* know? If a child does not understand a concept, it does not matter if we *think they should know it* or not. They don't.

The myth here lies in the fact that we assume that if a teacher taught the material, the student should know it. We forget that these are individual children, who learn differently, at

different rates, on different levels, and what they retain is going to differ from child to child.

There are many factors to consider in what information a child (or adult) retains.

*Do they have any prior knowledge about the topic?

*Is the topic interesting enough to hold their attention?

*Is the topic taught in a manner outside of their learning style?

*Is the information simply too difficult for their abilities?

For example, let's say your child has difficulty with multiplication. The topic for today is multiplying fractions. A child who has difficulty with multiplication will have serious trouble when asked to multiply fractions.

As a parent you need to be aware of your tolerance level. When you hear

statements like, "How can you not know this, we just went over it!" or "You are going to sit here until you get it!" coming out of your mouth, it's time for you to step back.

In this situation you are not helping. If you are unable to control those types of statements, it is time to hire a tutor or ask another family member to take over.

Example: I have been shown how to change the oil filter in my car. According to this myth, I should know how to do it, but I simply don't remember.

You can yell that I *should know it* until you're blue in the face, but I don't.

So keep yelling, the end result will be the same -- I simply don't remember.

Instead, teach me again.

CHAPTER NINE

INCORRECT PRIORITIES

I love this one! If your child doesn't get their homework done your priorities aren't in the proper order. Take this scenario: Johnny gets on the bus at 7:30am, he is in class until 3:00pm, attends basketball practice until 5:00pm and returns home at 5:30pm. He eats dinner at 6:00pm, and attends a Boy Scout meeting from 7:00pm to 8:00pm. He then returns home and has a bedtime of 9:30pm.

This leaves approximately one hour (8:30-9:30) to do his homework before he must get ready for bed. This

would be attainable if his homework only took one hour!

However, what has become a standard among students of all ages is 2-3 hours of homework.

So, what do we cut out of his schedule? Basketball or Boy Scouts? Should we give him a later bedtime?

For the most part this isn't even a realistic scenario since all travel time and parental obligations aren't even taken into account.

Have we forgotten that we are talking about children? Children who often put in more hours at school than some people put in at work? And what about before and after-school programs and daycare hours?

When considering the importance of homework, we must consider the whole child. If your child has 2-3 hours of homework it is time to re-evaluate.

Review your child's homework time. Is there a lot of fooling around, or is he diligently working for 2-3 hours? If the latter is true, you may want to speak to his teacher to see if something can be worked out.

We should strive to have well-rounded children. This would include scouts, sports, church, playtime, etc.

Education is extremely important and should have the highest ranking among activities, but learning, not school, should be a full-time job.

CHAPTER TEN

IF EDUCATION WAS IMPORTANT TO YOU. . .

Oh, I love this one too. It reeks of self-importance on the part of the speaker. It assumes that the family is waiting with bated breath for the child to come home and pull out the words of wisdom that were bestowed upon her. Then, you will put aside all other family obligations for the opportunity to complete homework.

REALITY CHECK!

I don't know about you, but my schedule is hectic and full. I have two children and not only must I keep my schedule, but I must handle theirs as well as find time for my husband and other family matters.

Homework is one small item on a long list of activities on any given day. Education is important, but so are many other things. Time must be found for a daily study time, but it must be flexible enough to work around *life*.

There are days that I leave the house at 7:00a.m. and return at 9:00p.m. If homework doesn't get finished it is not that I don't think education is important; it is because I was busy with *life* and didn't get to it.

To say otherwise is an insult.

REMEMBER: UNFINISHED HOMEWORK SHOULD BE THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE.

HELP!

MY CHILD AND I CAN'T DO HOMEWORK TOGETHER

SECTION THREE

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"BATTLE STATIONS"

That may seem like a negative title, but it's not. Homework time can be a battle. What you want to do is be prepared for it, but not participate in it. How? Well, there are some steps you need to take that will ease the frustration of homework for you and your child.

Just a note of caution before we move forward. It is important that you, as a parent, recognize the child's responsibility in this endeavor. I have

spoken to many parents who say "he simply refuses to do his homework."

I tell them that this is something they need to work out with their child before beginning any activity.

There was no "refusing" at my house. Doing homework was not an option my children had available to them. When it wasn't done, there were consequences. But every family structure is different and how you handle this situation is a family matter.

Just keep in mind that the following suggestions hinge on the fact that the student will put forth the effort required. Whether that effort is voluntary or mandatory is an individual family decision.

A SIDE NOTE:

So often we, as parents, must do things that we had hoped we would never have to do again. (Like homework!)

I also know there are times when you have the same thought every other parent has, but you don't want to say it out loud for fear of sounding selfish. The thought:

"I'VE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH SCHOOL. I'VE ALREADY DONE MY SHARE OF HOMEWORK, AND I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYMORE!"

There, it's out in the open. I've said it for you. Now we can move on.

As parents, it is important for you to recognize that you are "Mom" or "Dad" to your child, not "teacher" and that is the only relationship they want.

Your child does not want you to be their teacher, so don't become upset if there is friction between you and your child during at-home study time. This is typical and natural.

Your job in this situation is essentially as supervisor, guide, and resource. The quicker you learn to accept that, the quicker you will see results.

Here are the basic rules to maintaining a good working relationship with your child during "at-home" study time:

1. Keep a positive attitude.
   * Homework is something that needs to be done, so let's just do it.

2. Prepare a study environment that your child can feel comfortable in.
   *This will help to eliminate outside influences.

3. Set a study time.
   *Make it clear from the beginning that this time is not optional.

4. Monitor your child's progress.
   *Your child needs to know that they're doing well, so support their efforts.

Now let's look at each of these steps more closely.

A SPECIAL THOUGHT:

One of my young students needed to write a description of himself as a class assignment. As we sat together, he told me about himself, his family and his likes. When we got to the "dislikes" paragraph he told me, "I don't like green food and I don't like soccer because it's a girls' sport." After he thought for a few moments longer he replied, "I don't have too many dislikes, I have a good life."

CHAPTER TWELVE

KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Keeping a positive attitude can be difficult when you are dealing with a child who is resisting your attempts to help with homework.

Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

*Your child has been in school for approximately seven hours.

Homework adds two more hours of "school" onto his day.

*He will not be any happier about that than you would be to add two more hours onto your work day.

*Explain to your child that you understand this and that you would like to help make it easier.

*School is not a career. Work out a schedule that allows him time to be a kid.

*Try not to make it all seem like work. Make it as enjoyable as possible by setting out a bowl of popcorn and a drink. Let him watch a favorite TV program before or after his homework time, etc.

By eliminating as much of the negative aspects as you can, you will be making the experience more pleasant for the whole household!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING A GOOD STUDY ENVIRONMENT

Make sure you choose an area at home that is comfortable and has limited interruptions.

*Desks next to doors, windows, TV, telephones, etc. are not good choices.

*A desk in the child's room is a good place to start, but do consider other areas as well.

*If you utilize the kitchen table, try to make it a scheduled time that limits phone calls, TV, cooking, etc.

*Noise is a powerful distraction! In general, beware of the radio.

**(Note: some children actually need sound to help them concentrate. Playing soft, non-lyrical music in the background can help some children stay focused on the task at hand. This is called "white noise.")

*Be flexible and adjust to the needs of your child.

Maximize the area you choose by placing some "homework helpers" where they can be easily seen.

*Hang a piece of poster board or a dry-erase calendar above the study area. On it chart short and long term goals and projects.

*A bulletin board that has past homework assignments and examples of previous work can serve as a guide for new assignments.

Here's a study system my daughter uses:

*Write long-term homework assignments and the due date on sticky notes (use a different color for each subject) and stick them on the wall next to the study area. When an assignment is completed throw the sticky note away.

*Personalize the area by displaying good work the child has done previously. It could be a homework paper, test, project, or art work.

If finding a place at home is difficult, try the library or ask the school if your child could remain after school.

When you change a study environment, it may take a week or so before the student feels comfortable and/or any positive results are noticeable.

So give any changes time to work.

Keep all materials within reach. Make a list of things your child will need. It may take some time and effort to collect everything and you may miss an item or two, but you can always add more materials as you discover the need for them.

Find a container to hold supplies (preferably with a handle in case your child's study area must move to accommodate a special project).

The materials will vary depending upon the age, grade level and type of class. So start with the basics:

*pencils, pens, markers, colored pencils

*highlighters (different colors)

*pencil sharpener

*paper: white, colored, construction

*tape, glue, paste

*ruler, yardstick

*calculator

*dictionary, thesaurus

*paper clips, stapler (& staples)

*rubber bands

*index cards

Organize study guides, old tests, notes, and other miscellaneous important papers in pocket folders. Great for review!

Designate a folder for each class or project and label it. Use a color-coding system when possible.

My son and I developed a homework folder system that worked well for him. Rob had a different colored pocket folder for each of his classes. When opened, the right-side pocket was where homework "to be done" was placed. The left-side pocket was where "finished" homework was placed. This allowed him to instantly see whether all of his homework had been completed.

When studying for a final exam, old (corrected) tests or quizzes can make great study guides. Often a final exam will include questions taken from previously given quizzes or tests.

When working on long-term projects, such as a book report, it is a good idea to set up a schedule. Let's say that your child has a book report due on the last Friday of the month. When should he start reading? How

much time will he need to write the report?

Look at the example on the next page.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Chapters 1 - 4		Ch. 5 - 9	
	Ch. 10 - 15		Ch 16 - 19	
	Ch 20 - 21		Ch 22 - 23	
	Ch 24 - 25		Ch 26 - 27	
	Ch 28 - 29		Ch 30 - 31	
	Ch 32		Chapters 33 and 34	
Rough draft	Edit	Final copy	→	Book Report due today!

*The number of chapters are divided into semi-equal amounts to be read by certain dates.

*Chapters 1-4 need to be read by the first Tuesday, chapters 5-9 by the first Thursday, and so on.

*Adjustments can be made for busy weeks.

*If there is something special happening on the third Thursday of the month, then simply read chapters 22-23 on Wednesday, etc.

Time management is a skill that needs to be taught - it is not necessarily hereditary.

12
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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SET TIME GUIDELINES

Turn homework time into a structured "study time."

*Set a specific time for studying and make it part of each day.

Be flexible only with the hour of the day your child will study, not the studying itself.

*Due to other activities (scouts, sports, church, etc.) the hour in

which your child may study can be altered, but not the choice to study. Some students actually study better in the morning, so set up a study time before school.

*Beware of the procrastinator -- make sure she works better in the morning before making this change.

*Be flexible with your timing. If your child thinks that she would like to play right after school, before doing homework, try it for a two-week period. You can try doing homework directly after school, or after a play period, or just before bed, etc. Then set it permanently at the time that works the best.

Study time should be non-negotiable and designed with limited interruptions.

*No TV, phone, visitors, etc.

Make it clear that this is "study time" not "homework time." Maintain a consistent routine. If your child doesn't have homework, the study time can include any number of alternative tasks:

*Reviewing the current chapter in a textbook

*Preparing a study guide for an upcoming test

*Taking notes

*Designing a mock test from notes and textbook information

*Reading a school-assigned book

*Reading ahead in a textbook

Study time means that the child is working on studying for her classes.

Regardless of whether she has homework or not!

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MONITOR THE PROGRESS

Stay in proximity to your child while he is working.

*Check on him regularly. Ask the following questions:

"When are these assignments due?"

"What assignment are you going to

start with?"

"What are the directions for this assignment?"

Check his work for mistakes before he gets too far.

*It is much easier to correct a few errors than to have to go back and correct an entire page.

Don't forget: It's not your homework!

*Offer suggestions only when he is stuck.

*Don't give the answer, show him how to find it.

*Explaining the steps to finding the information needed is much better than simply locating it for him.

**This is the same philosophy behind the old saying: "give them a fish and they'll eat for a day, show them how to fish and they'll

eat for a lifetime."

Set goals for each session, week, quarter, report card, etc.

*Set attainable goals.

*Have both long-term and short-term goals

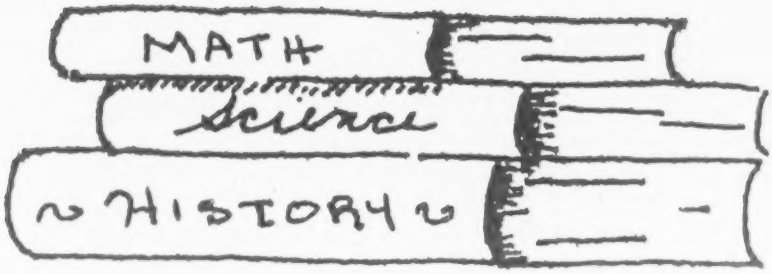
Examples:

**Long-term: to obtain a 'B' average in math this year

**Short-term: to hand in all homework assignments this week in social studies

*Reward him with a trip to the movies, or a coupon for one day of no chores, etc. when a goal is reached.

Whatever happens, the full study time is always used.


MATH
Science
HISTORY

SECTION FOUR

STUDY TIPS FOR SPECIFIC CONTENT AREAS

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

OVERVIEW

It would be impossible to have a suggestion for every type of homework assignment that could be given to a student.

Workbook pages and ditto sheets are fairly easy to understand because they usually have directions written on them. When a teacher assigns "math textbook pages 46 and 47" it's pretty much straight-forward what is expected.

Therefore, I have chosen to address the most abstract types of assignments, i.e. spelling, vocabulary, textbook, and novel. These are the homework assignments that often do not come with directions.

In the middle and upper grades, the book or novel assignment can be the most troublesome. This is because the child is usually told to read the book and that there will be a test at the end of the grading period. The most effective method of teaching a book lesson is to use class time to discuss the material (but often this does not happen). Your child needs to develop a system for studying a book so that they have a grasp of the material before the test.

I have also included some study techniques, i.e. mapping and timelines, in order to help you and your child develop a system for studying material not assigned in the typical worksheet format.

However, there are some general principles that do apply to all homework.

Setting a homework or "study time" should begin in first grade and continue until the child graduates.

*This helps to develop a lifelong learning pattern.

First and second grade children who have a limited amount of homework should use this time to perfect their language skills. The time span here does not have to last for 30-60 minutes. Often 10-15 minutes is long enough at this early stage.

*Time could include reading and then illustrating what they read.

*Retelling familiar stories in their own words, changing the characters or the ending.

Kindergarten, first and second grade children need a lot of repetition

when first learning letter recognition and sounds.

*A mistake that is often made by parents is that they try to teach too much at once.

*Work on one letter or letter sound at a time. Then work on the second letter or sound and when the child is fluent with both, add the third, etc.

*Use the bright-colored plastic magnetic letters. Place them on the refrigerator one at a time and make a game out of having your child tell you the letter name and sound.

*Encourage them to find items in the refrigerator or around the room that begin with that letter.

It is important that early exposure to homework time be positive. You don't want your child to develop a bitter taste for their at-home assignments (that could come soon enough!).

Reading a story at bedtime is still one of the most rewarding and important activities a parent and child can participate in. However, a step that is often left out is the answering of questions. Not you -- your child!

*Start your bedtime reading with a question:

"From the cover (picture), what do you think this book is about?"

*After you've read a while, stop and ask:

"What do you think will happen next?"

or

"Why do you think ____ did that?"

*Before the climax of the story, stop and ask:

"How do you think this story is going to end?"

This verbal interaction is very important in helping your child develop their critical-thinking skills. This is the ability to understand what is happening and why. This enables your child to look beyond what is written and see what is possible. This skill is sadly missing in many of my students.

I had an interesting conversation with one of my former students a few years ago. The student told me that when her history teacher gave them a test at the end of the semester, it included only one item:

> "Tell me which country you think benefited the most from World War II, and why."

She said that most of the class just sat back and sighed.

Why? Because of two words: "you think." These students couldn't simply rely on the names, dates, and places they had memorized the night before.

They were being asked to *think* about what they had learned.

It is extremely important that we, as parents, help our children understand that learning is more than simply memorizing facts. It is much more. This is where the questioning portion of bedtime reading can be useful. It teaches them how to *think*.

A B C

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SPELLING / VOCABULARY

There are several steps to studying spelling and vocabulary words.

Repetition is key. Yet, having the child write the words several times works well only when it is accompanied by other activities:

*Print the words a specified number of times.

*Write the words in cursive a specified number of times. (The words may not always be presented in printed form only, therefore the student needs to recognize the spelling of these words in both written forms.)

*Practice writing the words without the benefit of seeing them.

*Write the words on notecards. (Spelling words are placed on only one side, while vocabulary should have the word on one side and the definition on the other.)

*Practice the words together. The parent will say the word and the student will either write the spelling word or give the correct vocabulary definition.

*Place the cards in two stacks:

1. Words written or defined correctly
2. Words that need to be worked on further

*Continue to work on the words in stack #2, placing them into stack #1 as they are learned.

*The night before the test have the student work with you on the entire stack of cards again.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TEXTBOOK

Organization is the key here -- simply reading the text is not going to qualify as studying.

*Read through the chapter at least one time.

*Answer the chapter review questions (if there are any).

*Some students may find it more

effective to read the questions before reading the chapter. This allows them to have an idea of what to be looking for as they read.

*The student may also want to answer the questions as they come across the answers in the reading.

*Highlight any notebook entries that may pertain to these questions. (This can help the student if the teacher uses a test designed by the textbook company.)

*Go through the notebook and highlight all names and dates of importance.

*Define any bold-faced words using the glossary, the dictionary, and the context of the paragraph.

For example:

"He found himself in a

hollow, which is the
term his grandfather
used for a valley.
Not knowing which
way to turn, he went
back the way he entered."

The context of the paragraph indicates that the word "hollow" in this passage means "a valley." Yet, if the student was using a dictionary the first entry may be "empty within; not solid." A glossary definition may also include "of little worth; fruitless."

By defining the word with all three types of definitions the student will be better equipped to answer test questions regardless of which definition is required.

*Pay close attention to graphs, photographs, illustrations, charts, etc. and the captions underneath them. These are often overlooked by students, and may have important information not listed in the paragraphs.

*When finished with the above activities, the final step is to summarize the chapter.

This allows the student the opportunity to see if they can recall the important information.

This can be done either in writing or verbally, but having the student write is better since that is most likely the form that will be on the test.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

NOVEL

A novel is different from a textbook and cannot be studied the same way!

*Make a prediction of the plot based on the title, back cover, introduction and any prior knowledge of the book.

*Write a summary after each chapter. Keep these summaries together.

*Define any unfamiliar words.

*Halfway through the book, stop and retell the story in one's own words. Include the plot, setting, and major characters. Describe what parts they play and how they fit into the storyline.

*Three-quarters of the way through the story, stop and repeat the last step. Include how things may have changed.

*When completely finished, retell the story to a partner. They can ask questions about it. This will help the student to fill in the blanks or unclear story lines. Go back to the summaries and make any needed additions or changes to them.

*When the student is ready to study, use the summaries, definitions and notes.

Keep in mind that test questions for novels often ask questions about

what isn't directly stated as well as what is directly stated in the story.

CHAPTER TWENTY

MAPPING / OUTLINING

Outlining is to help your child develop their thoughts in an organized manner.

The idea behind mapping is to make an outline more visual. It takes awhile to learn to map effectively, but once learned it is a great tool.

Therefore, let's look at mapping first:

*Place the topic in the middle of the page. Draw a circle around it.

*From the topic circle -- write subtopics around in no particular pattern. Draw circles around them. Then connect the circles with lines.

*From the subtopic circles -- write the important details relating to that subtopic. Draw lines to connect the related items together.

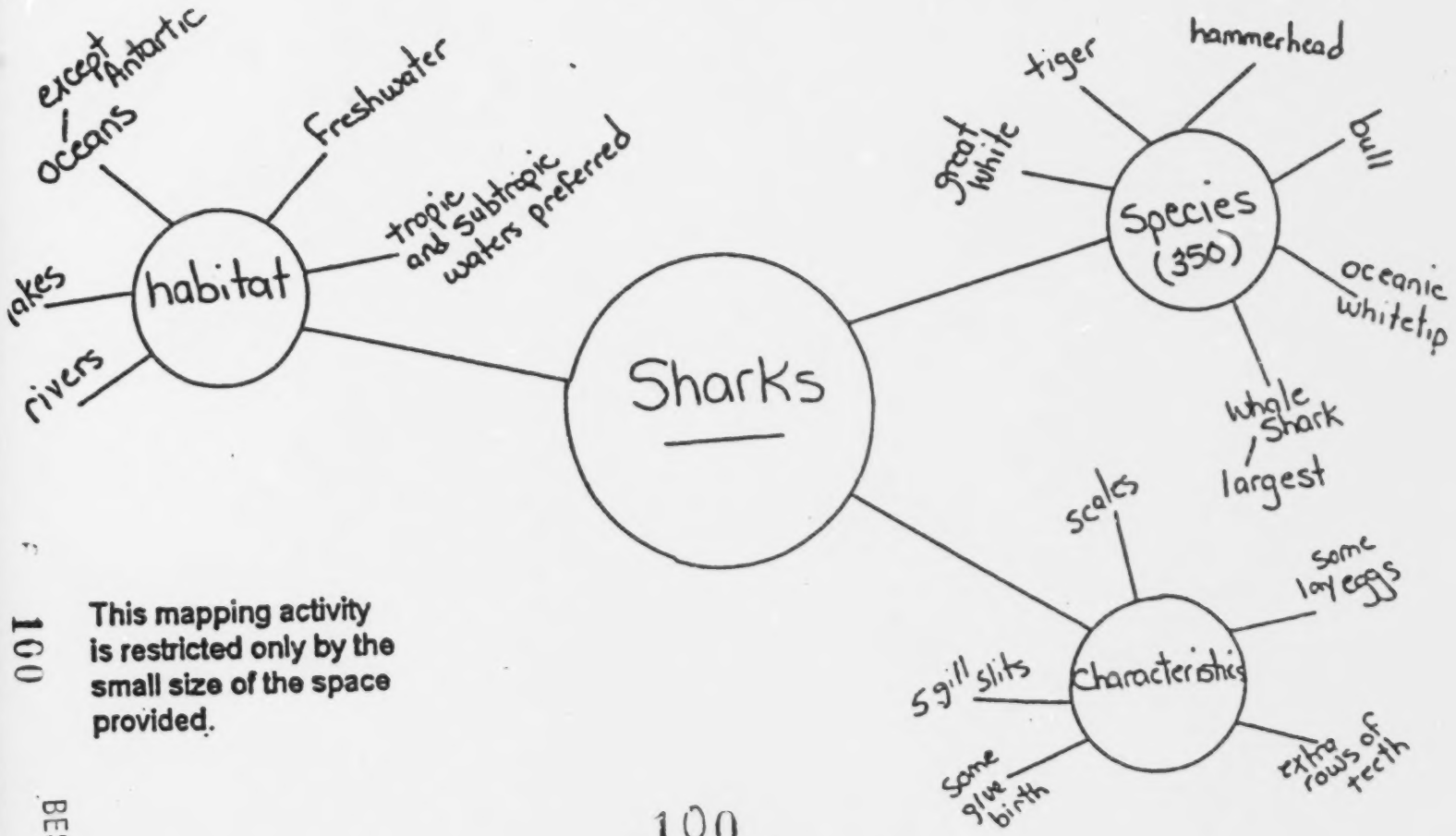
*Details can be added as they are learned. There is no limit to the amount of information used, but it is best to try to stay to one- or two-word entries.

The benefit of using a mapping activity in studying is obvious. **The information can be immediately located and is organized.**

Mapping can be done from information given in a lecture, taken

from lengthy notes or directly out of a textbook chapter.

The example of mapping on the next page was designed around the knowledge I already possess about sharks. If I had used an encyclopedia or textbook the map would have been much larger and more detailed.



This mapping activity is restricted only by the small size of the space provided.

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As you can see from the previous activity, a map can make an outline much easier to study. I often suggest that my students make a map first so they can formulate their thoughts before writing. Then they can write the traditional outline from the map.

I have created an outline based on my mapping activity. The format is changed somewhat to accommodate the traditional format of an outline.

*"Birthing" has been added in order to allow for the two types of birthing methods.

*The term "regenerates" was also added to further clarify the reason for the extra rows of teeth.

This would be considered a rough draft. There are many other changes that could be made as more research is done.

I. Sharks

A. Habitat
1. Tropical waters
2. Subtropical waters
3. Freshwater
4. Lakes
5. Rivers
6. Oceans
a. except Antarctic

B. Species
1. Great White
2. Tiger
3. Hammerhead
4. Bull
5. Oceanic Whitetip
6. Whale Shark
a. largest

C. Characteristics
1. Scales
2. 5 gill slits
3. Extra rows of teeth
a. regenerate
4. Birthing
a. some lay eggs
b. some give birth naturally

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

TIMELINES

The use of timelines can be effective for taking a series of dated information and organizing it so that it is visually easier to study.

*Write the topic at the top of the page.

*Draw the timeline bar.

*Insert the same number of dashes as dates required.

*Write the year above or below the dash depending upon space (use month/day/year only if all of this information is needed).

*Because the topic is listed at the top of the page; it is not necessary to continually write this information over and over (see example #1 -- a re-creation of one of my student's original timelines).

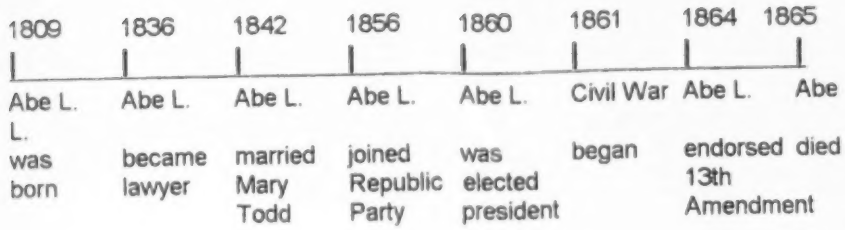
*Longer dashes can be used if more information needs to be added later (see example #2).

*Timelines do not have to lay horizontally.

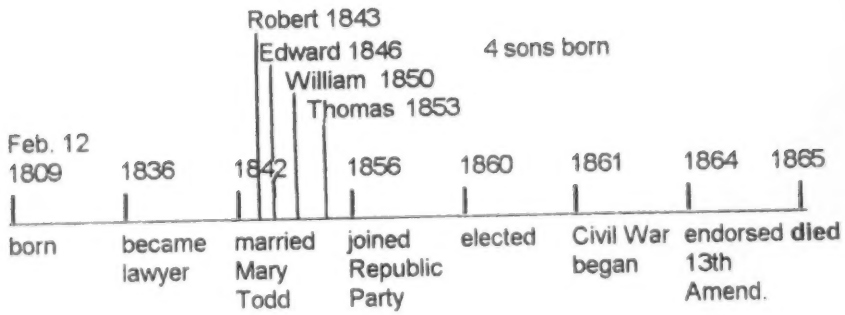
*Keep the wording short.

Abraham Lincoln

Example #1



Example #2



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CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

STATISTICS

As a teacher, I noticed that parent involvement dropped dramatically when the children reached middle school. Therefore, I chose parent involvement as the theme of my master's degree project.

Part of this project included a survey. I gave a survey to the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers from my local middle school. I sent the

same survey home for the parents of the sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. I then compared the answers.

My hypothesis was that teachers and parents view the role of parents in pretty much the same way. The survey results substantiated this hypothesis.

There were only a few statements in which the opinions of the parents and teachers differed widely. The two statements that stand out were:

*Parents should participate by committee in hiring and firing of principals and teachers.

*Parents should participate by committee in evaluating how well teachers and principals do their jobs.

As you can imagine there was a distinct division in the responses given by the teachers and the responses given by the parents.

Please note that this survey was conducted on a very limited scale. This included only one school in one town. However, it does gives us a sampling to review.

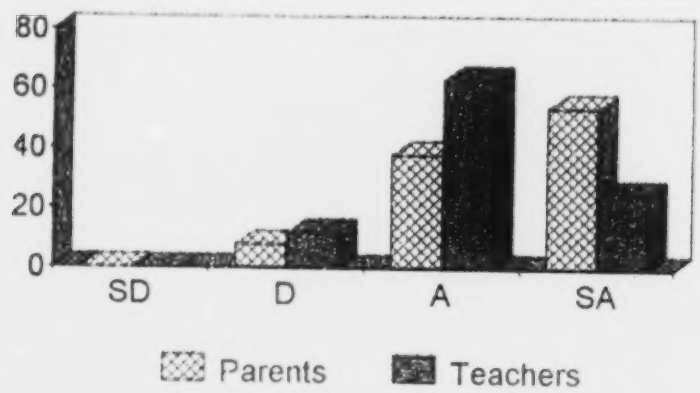
The following graphs show some of the statements from the survey and the results. I have included the statements that I believe are the most relevant to this book.

The results were recorded in percentages. The participants indicated their opinion by rating their response with:

SD = Strongly Disagree
D = Disagreee
A = Agree
SA = Strongly Agree

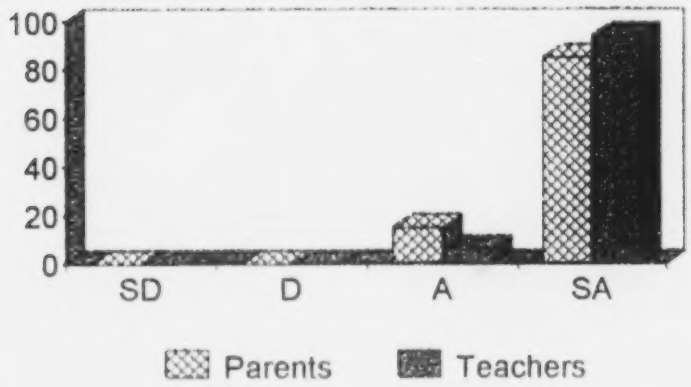
RESULTS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Statement 1: Parents want to be involved in their child's education:



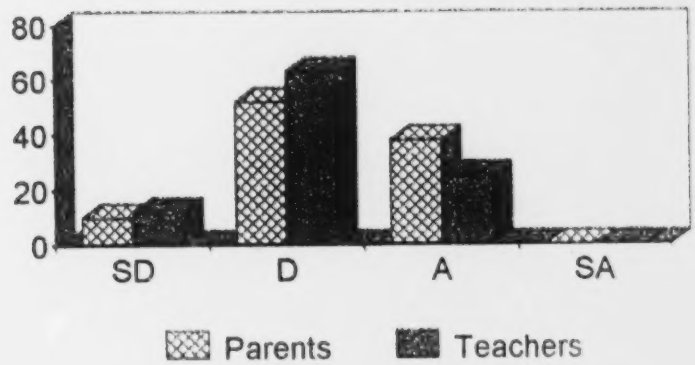
Parents: SD-0%, D-8%, A-38%, SA-54%
Teachers: SD-0%, D-12%, A-63%, SA-25%

Statement 2: Parents can have an effect on their child's success in school:



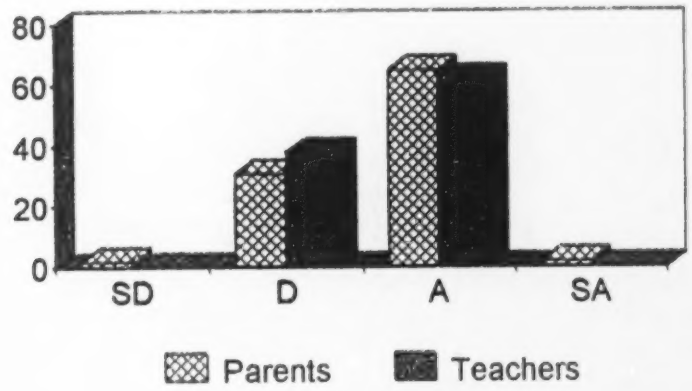
Parents:	SD-0%,	D-0%,	A-15%,	SA-85%
Teachers:	SD-0%,	D-0%,	A-6%,	SA-94%

Statement 3: Working parents do not have time to be involved in school events, (ex: workshops, field trips, concerts).



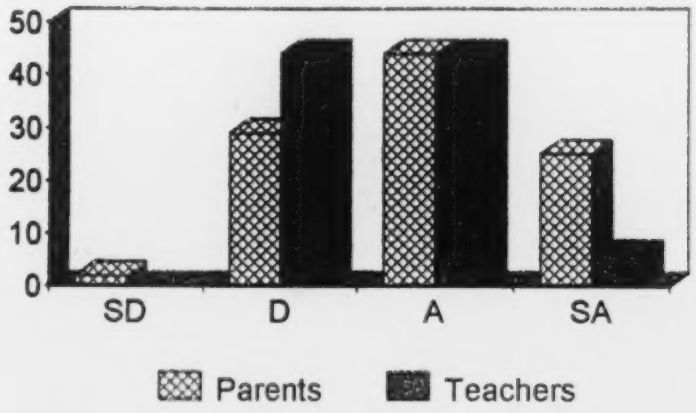
Parents:	SD-10%,	D-52%,	A-38%,	SA-0%
Teachers:	SD-12%,	D-63%,	A-25%,	SA-0%

Statement 4: Parents feel comfortable when they visit the school:



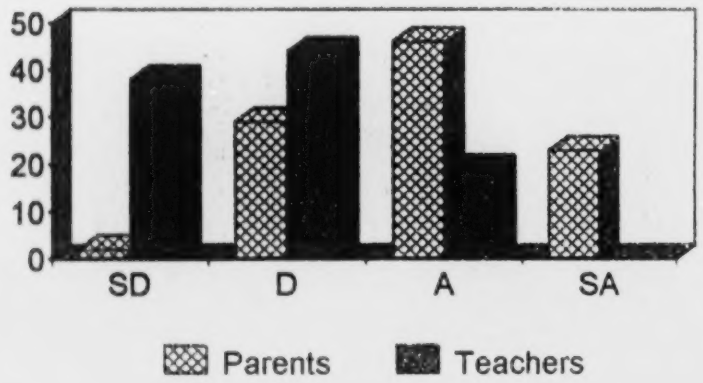
Parents:	SD-2%,	D-31%,	A-65%,	SA-2%
Teachers:	SD-0%,	D-38%,	A-62%,	SA-0%

Statement 5: Parents should be included in evaluating how well their own child is learning:



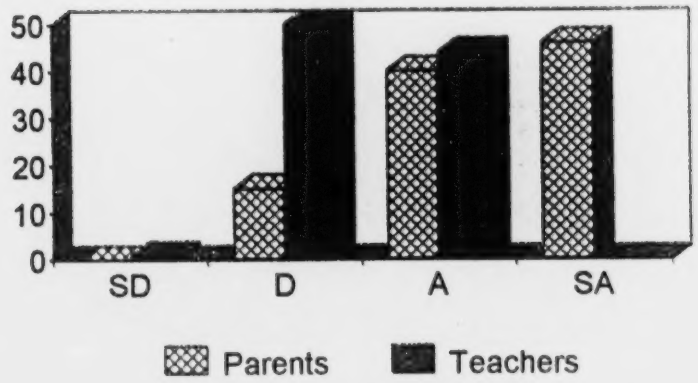
Parents:	SD-2%,	D-29%,	A-44%,	SA-25%
Teachers:	SD-0%,	D-44%,	A-44%,	SA-6%

Statement 6: Parents should participate by committee in evaluating how well teachers and principals do their jobs:



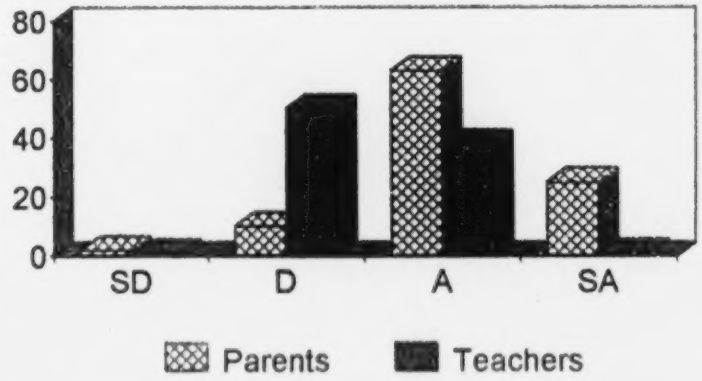
Parents:	SD-2%,	D-29%,	A-46%,	SA-23%
Teachers:	SD-38%,	D-44%,	A-19%,	SA-0%

Statement 7: Teachers should send home progress reports monthly to keep parents updated:



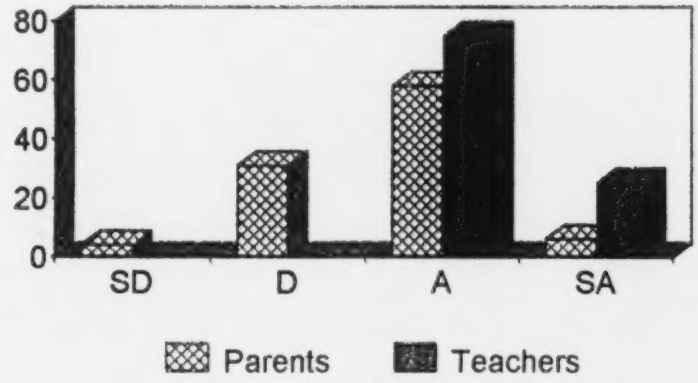
Parents:	SD-0%,	D-15%,	A-40%,	SA-46%
Teachers:	SD-1%,	D-50%,	A-44%,	SA-0%

Statement 8: Each grade should send home a monthly newsletter with projects, achievements, event notices, etc.:



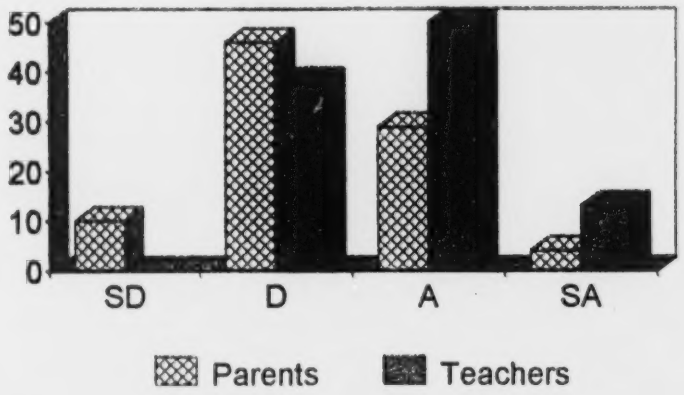
Parents:	SD-2%,	D-10%,	A-63%,	SA-25%
Teachers:	SD-1%,	D-50%,	A-38%,	SA-1%

Statement 9: Teachers welcome parent's comments and expectations about their child's school program:



Parents:	SD-4%,	D-31%,	A-58%,	SA-6%
Teachers:	SD-0%,	D-0%,	A-75%,	SA-25%

Statement 10: Parents are encouraged to visit their child's classroom:



Parents:	SD-10%,	D-46%,	A-29%,	SA-4%
Teachers:	SD-0%,	D-38%,	A-50%,	SA-13%

The results of this survey lead me to conclude that in many areas the teachers and parents are in agreement.

I included a comments section on the survey and received some insightful remarks.

In reference to Statement 1, which addressed the issue of whether parents truly want to be involved in their children's education, teacher comments included: "I believe most, not all." and "Most parents want to be involved, but are unsure how to do so."

Parent responses reflected a strong belief that parents want to be involved. (This could be expected from parents who took the time to respond to the survey.)

In general, the consensus seemed to be that parents do care about what their child is doing and would become more involved if given specific direction and assistance.

EXIT...

SECTION FIVE

Conclusion

Take breaks often and find time to do the most important thing you can as a parent:

ENJOY YOUR CHILDREN

for they are the most important piece of this puzzle.

I hope this little book has given you some insight on how to become involved with your child's education (and taught you some tips on how to help with homework too).

The educational system has known for years that parents are an important resource when trying to learn about a child. Now, it is time that the parents realize just how important they are to their child's education.

Maybe the educational system just needs a little help from you!

Good luck, and remember learning, not school, is a lifelong process.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robin Quick is a parent, teacher, educational director for a learning center, and adjunct college instructor. Robin received her B.S. in Elementary Education, M.Ed. in Reading, and Reading Specialist Certification from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. She presents seminars and workshops of a variety of educational topics.

Robin, her husband, David, and their two children, Robert and Christina live in western Pennsylvania. They share a home with their dog, Nestle, and two cats, Bobcat and PMS.

For information on seminars, please call 814-725-5695

Does your child fight you when it's time to do homework?

Does your child study, but is still unable to pass the tests?

Do you often feel like you are simply spinning your wheels?

****

If the answer to any of these questions is "YES" then this book is for you.

Topics covered include:

*How to be involved in your child's education

*Dispelling homework myths

*How to study: textbooks, novels, etc. more effectively

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